

# The Volcano Next Door

*Got a grumpy neighbor? How about sharing your island with a volcano?*

**O**ver 500 million people live near volcanoes. Sounds scary. Wouldn't you constantly worry about an eruption? Well, yes, but somehow people manage. Scientists map the lava hazard zones. Residents learn how to deal with "vog," volcanic smog. But people also focus on the good things volcanoes can do. Lava enriches the soil. The heat energy deep inside volcanoes can be used to make electricity and heat homes. Volcanoes even create islands.

## Hawaii's Hotheads

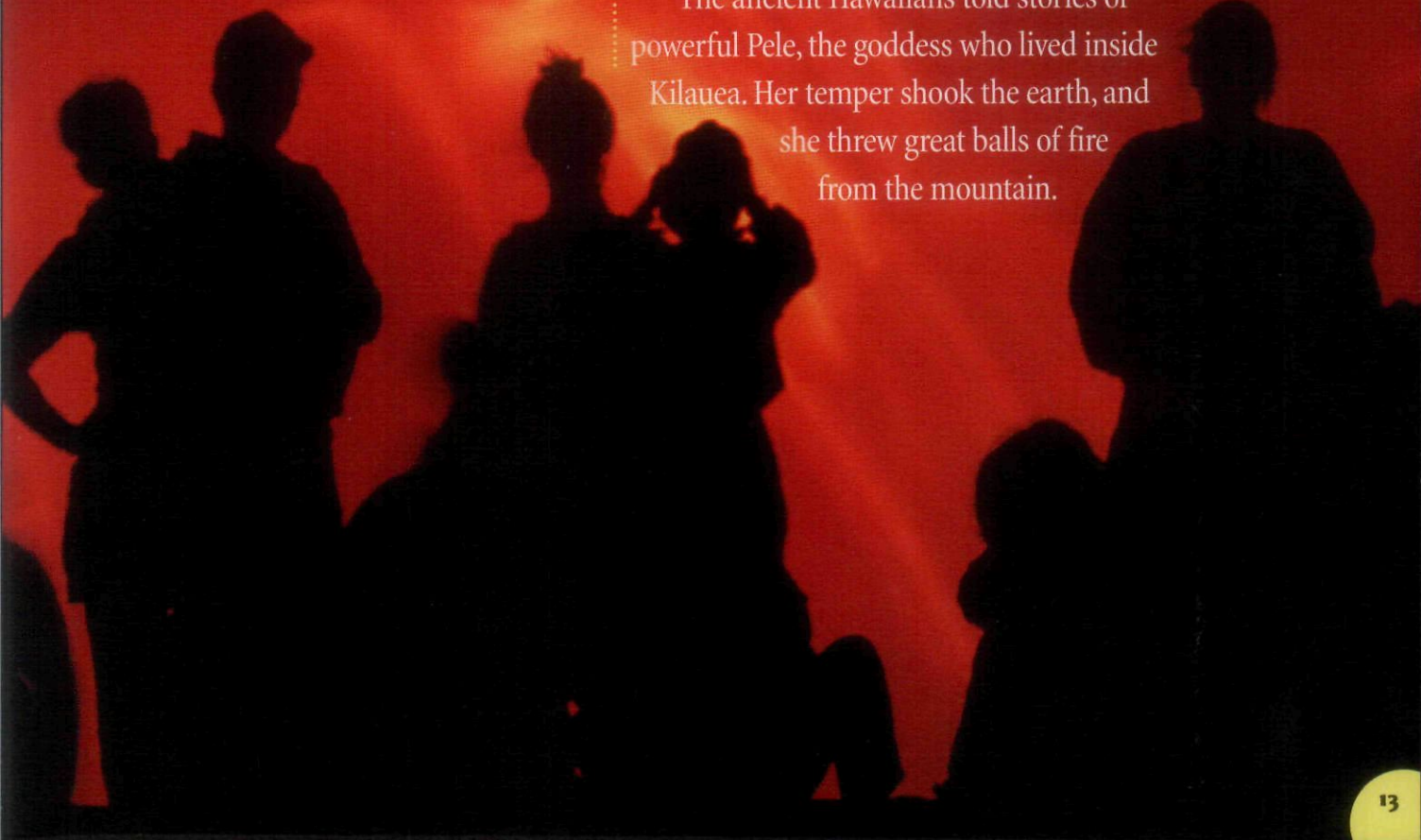
That's how Hawaii was made. People on the "Big Island" have five volcano neighbors. One of them, Kilauea, which has been erupting constantly since 1983, is the world's most active volcano. Sometimes fountains of fire shoot from cracks in its side, but mostly, the gently sloping mountain oozes lava. Although roads and towns lie buried under Kilauea's lava, people live nearby.

The ancient Hawaiians told stories of powerful Pele, the goddess who lived inside Kilauea. Her temper shook the earth, and she threw great balls of fire from the mountain.

No kidding!



The lava paid no attention to this sign when it overran a road in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.





Perhaps imagining a reason for such scary events comforted people, relieving their fear of the unknown. And people could hope to gain some protection from the volcano by making offerings to its cranky goddess.

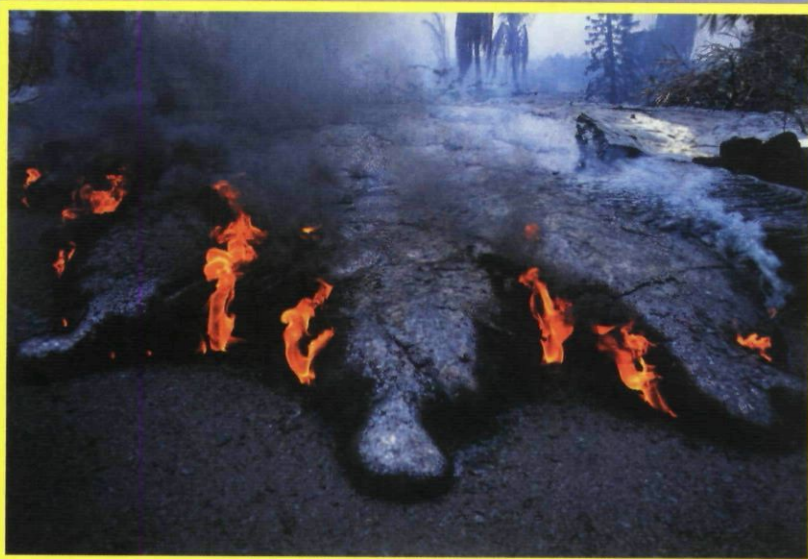
To this day, many Hawaiians consider Kilauea sacred and celebrate there. Tourists and scientists visit, too, since it is part of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park—one of the best places in the world to get to know the volcano next door. ✈️



This hardy fern called ama'u grows around the crater of Kilauea. The story goes that Madame Pele once rejected a marriage proposal, blowing fire at the unlucky fellow. He turned himself into a fern and surrounded her home, but the fire singed his leaves and turned them pink.



Golden locks? No. Fine strands of volcanic glass called Pele's hair are spun by the wind as melted rock blows from Kilauea and then cools very fast.



Tongues of lava lick a road near Kilauea.

To see what's happening at Kilauea right now, go to

✎ <http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov/cam/index.htm>.

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